

Remarks and an Exchange With Reporters Prior to Discussions With United Nations Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali

May 12, 1992

The President. Let me just say first how delighted I am to see the Secretary-General again, and also perhaps the world's most renowned international environmentalist, Mr. Maurice Strong, whom I've known for many, many years.

I want to take this opportunity to say that I will be going to Rio, to the important meeting there. I think that we have a big stake. I take great pride in the fact that, in many ways, the U.S. has been a leader for environmental matters. I'm convinced that we can have jobs and economic growth as well as sound economic environmental practice. I will be taking the U.S. message to Rio to that end. And I'm very pleased that it's been worked out. And I called the President of Brazil a few minutes ago, Fernando Collor, who is most interested in this. But I'm grateful to both of you. And we have lots to talk about, but I did want to get that message out.

Q. How long will you stay? Will you go for the whole meeting?

The President. Well, no, I couldn't possibly do that. We have an election on in the United States this year and plus some other pressing problems.

Q. Are you involved?

The President. No, it's a very complicated—and I explained that to Brazil's President, my dear friend, and I think he understands it. But we haven't actually picked a date. We can talk, I guess, if there's one that seems better than others. But I won't be able to stay long. We'll have representation there, good, high-level, strong representation, but I'm very pleased that it's been worked out so that I can be a part of this important meeting.

Q. Mr. President, after your meeting with congressional leaders, are you encouraged that compromises can be found quickly?

The President. Well, I was talking to Marlin about it, and I understand that the spirit that was in that room, a spirit of "let's get something done," was reflected in the statements afterwards. And let's hope that we

can move forward.

Now, I don't want to take any more questions in here because we've got a lot to talk about with the U.N. Secretary-General.

But let me just say before we close off those machines, in my view he came into the United Nations at a very difficult time, but also perhaps the most challenging time in its history as it begins to fulfill its mission in not just the social and economic side that Maurice Strong's been so active in but in the political side. I'm talking about peacekeeping, peacemaking. And he is off to a fantastic start, and I want to work with him to see where the United States can be as cooperative as possible with the United Nations. They're doing a lot of things that benefit mankind in both the economic and social council, all those agenda items, and now in this very important peacekeeping, beginning to fulfill the dream of the founders, and that's very, very important.

Q. Does that mean you're going to give them some more money?

The President. Well, I don't know, Sarah [Sarah McClendon, McClendon News Service]. You've got a price tag on everything. I'm going to tell him we don't have all the money we'd like.

Q. Is the accord watered down so much that they say it's so filled with ambiguities now that—

The President. Oh, I don't think so. They've got a broad agenda for this Conference, and people have been focusing on one part of it. But we've got lots to talk about down there.

Thank you all very much.

Note: The President spoke at 11:35 a.m. in the Oval Office. In his remarks, he referred to Maurice Strong, Secretary General of the U.N. Conference on Environment and Development.